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## THE SITUATION IN CUBA.

BY SENOR DON SEGUNDO ALVAREZ, EX-MAYOR OF HAVANA.

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REGARDING the situation of affairs in Cuba, upon which I have been invited to write for the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, the most recent information in my possession shows that the insurrectionary movement makes no progress and that as soon as the rainy season is over the government will increase its efforts to bring it to a speedy termination. The country at large is fully resolved to withhold support from a movement which must lead to ruin. Whatever strength the insurrection has shown has been derived more than anything else from external aid, assisted by the involved financial situation of the country at present. But for these causes the movement would have ended almost as soon as it began.

Many make a mistake in believing that this insurrection is similar in character to the last outbreak in Cuba. According to the judgment of intelligent men there were causes which justified the previous conflict, and many of the principal citizens took an active part in it, believing themselves so powerful that they refused the concessions offered to them by the then provisional government of Spain. That war was more humane. Entire towns took the field with the insurrectionists, but to no avail. The disappointment experienced by its principal leaders proved to them the uselessness of such an undertaking, unless, indeed, they wished to convert the island into a scene of discord and racial war. From the result of that struggle thinking men and lovers of the country learned that the only hope for the well-being of Cuba was to remain under the Spanish flag, and so to obtain all the liberties enjoyed by countries organized under modern laws. Their efforts were being surely, although slowly, crowned with success, for under the sway of political order they were acquiring all the

rights which belonged to them, and further attempts were being made, with all prospect of favorable result, for the establishment of administrative and economical reforms, the people of the island having direct control of these affairs. For these reasons men who reflect, and men who have families and material interests to think of, excepting, perhaps, some visionary schemers, do not approve of the present uprising, which is more anarchic than political in its character, as shown both by the means which it employs and by the greater number of the leaders who have thrown themselves into it, who have come from different quarters, and who, as a rule, have absolutely nothing to lose.

At the conclusion of the previous rebellion, two political groups were created, one styling itself *Union Constitucional o Conservadora*, which comprises the greater portion of those who had come from Spain. This party had for its chief aim the defence of the flag without regard to class distinctions, but it sought in a cautious and moderate way to effect improvements in the political situation. The other party, *Autonomista*, very largely composed of native Cubans and directed by the most illustrious of them, presented an autonomic plan similar to that in operation in Canada. This party was working with much constancy and great faith to bring about reform and by means of peaceful procedure to arrive at the goal of their aspirations. Having modified in the mean time, some institutions which experience had shown to require alteration, the conservative party did not develop according to the growing necessities of the times, the majority of the party being unwilling to accept the proposals of its more advanced wing. With the object of harmonizing conflicting interests and bringing together the antagonistic elements of the country, an economic league was formed, and men of both parties assembled to discuss in a fraternal spirit such economical questions as were of supreme interest to the island. This movement was suspended; but, as soon as Minister Maura presented his plan of reforms, it gave origin to a third party of an intermediary character, which is called *Reformista*. This party, embracing within it both Spaniards and Cubans, has been the bulwark by which the cause of true reform has been saved from ship-wreck. Such is the actual situation of the different parties.

The idea of independence, which, without a doubt, has been very grateful to the majority of the native-born, experience in the

previous outbreak proved to be futile. Little encouragement can be derived by those who cherish this hope from the examples of the republics of South and Central America, which have already become emancipated. None of them has been able, owing to the diverse elements of their populations, to organize a nation under the form they originally pictured to themselves.

Annexation to the United States, about which many dream—more so out of the country than within it—is an absolute impossibility. The greater majority of the Cubans do not wish it, because they realize that, should it be put into effect, their individuality would disappear in a short time. The most thoughtful men of the island, to whom I have already referred, see no other solution than to continue belonging to Spain, to live tranquilly under the national flag, and to endeavor to bring about all the reforms which may be necessary for the well-being of the country.

The United States have, in my opinion, great interest in whatever situation the affairs of Cuba may find themselves in. It is to their interest that the island should be prosperous, because in that way the commercial relations between them will become wider and more fruitful. The number of American importations will increase more than those of any other country, owing to the proximity of the United States and Cuba to each other, and the cordial relations which have existed between them so long. This admits of no doubt, for if the mercantile balance is compared to that of all the countries with which the United States have relations, none, considering the number of inhabitants, is of such importance as the commerce with the island of Cuba, and the greater the prosperity of that island the greater the produce it will be able to purchase. Were Cuba independent its relations with the United States would be practically the same as those of Santo Domingo and similar countries, so that the American nation, being a calculating one, cannot help seeing, apart from the treaties which it has already made with the Spanish nation for the maintenance of peace, that the insurrection will be injurious to them. I am aware that some States—like Florida, for example, which has grown through Cuban immigration and developed flourishing towns with regular industries—view these questions in a different light. Persons from the State just named, inspired by the desire for gain, are apt to commit infractions of international law, which may lead, to-morrow or the day after,

to disagreeable complications between the United States and Spain, but the interest of the United States is not in having war within, much less outside. What is to their benefit is the constant and admirable development of their vast resources, which they are achieving to the admiration of the entire world.

I have been recently misrepresented as saying that the American flag covered all crimes. But the remarks made above show how impossible it would be for me to make such a statement. What I have said is that certain things have been done to cover criminal acts against Cuba by the *Separatistas* or their sympathizers, and by speculators who generally cover themselves with their American naturalization papers. And this is true.

SEGUNDO ALVAREZ.